

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

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PA/HO, Department of State  
E.O. 12958, as amended  
Date: 6-21-06

CIA

W/D  
BOX 3

NND 969039

# Memorandum

SECRET

TO : NEA - Mr. Sisco  
THRU : NEA - Mr. Atherton  
FROM : NEA/ARN - Andrew I. Killgore  
SUBJECT: Kurdish Appeal for U.S. Assistance

DATE: April 5, 1972

59/630/13/4/6

Attached is a memorandum of the Uthman-Scotes conversation. Uthman made an appeal for direct or indirect U.S. assistance to enable Barzani to establish an Iraqi Arab-Kurdish "liberation movement" in Iraqi Kurdistan with the aim of overthrowing the Ba'athi regime in Baghdad. He also transmitted a letter to the Secretary (see attached rough translation) in which Barzani makes the same appeal. He has requested an answer to this appeal by Thursday, April 6.

Our initial reaction to this appeal is negative based on our views that (a) a Barzani-dominated regime would have difficulty surviving in the face of what would doubtless become consolidated Arab opposition to it from both inside and outside Iraq; (b) the Soviets are so well established economically in Iraq that even if Barzani succeeds in overthrowing the Ba'athis, it is unlikely that he could break Iraq's ties with Moscow unless we were prepared to step in with immediate and perhaps large-scale assistance; (c) USG support for a coup operation which at best appears to be ill organized would be difficult to conceal and thus the USG would risk further strains on its relations with the other Arab states because of support for a non-Arab movement backed by other non-Arab states (Iran and Israel) against "the Arabs"; (d) facilitating the coming to power of a Kurdish-supported government in Baghdad also risks arousing the expectations of Kurds in neighboring Iran and Turkey, thus causing concern in at least Turkey if not Iran; (e) any encouragement to the Kurds can only give further impetus to Kurdish nationalist aspirations which aim eventually to establish a separate state of Kurdistan, a step which would be retrogressive in that it would represent further fragmentation in an already fragmented area.

Despite the above initial reaction, we have discussed this matter with Roy who agrees that it would be useful if we had an informal review of the Kurdish situation with Mike Waller of CIA before making any final decision regarding the Uthman appeal. CIA has also been getting through independent sources the same information and similar appeals. Such a review would be in line with your thoughts expressed to Tom Scotes at the



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NEA/ARN - Andrew I. Killgore

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airport yesterday that we continue to update our assessments and not be guided solely by conventional wisdom concerning such matters.

Meanwhile, we would recommend that you brief the Secretary orally about this problem in view of the fact that the letter from Barzani is addressed to him.

Attachments:

Memorandum of Conversation  
Translation of Barzani letter  
to the Secretary

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## DEPARTMENT OF STATE

## Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: April 3, 1972

SUBJECT: Kurdish Appeal for U. S. Assistance

PARTICIPANTS: T. J. Scotes, Esq., Officer-in-Charge, Jordanian Affairs;  
Zayd Uthman, Special Emissary from Mulla Mustafa Barzani

PLACE: Hay-Adams Hotel, Washington, D. C.

SUMMARY

During an April 3 meeting arranged at his request, Zayd Uthman, Special Emissary from Kurdish leader Mulla Mustafa Barzani, made the following points to Iraqi Desk Officer Thomas J. Scotes:

- a) As a result of the recent visit to Moscow by Saddam Husayn al-Tikriti, Assistant Secretary General of the Iraqi Ba'th Party, Soviet influence in Iraq has been dramatically enhanced.
- b) The Soviets are now pressing Mulla Mustafa to join the Iraqi Ba'th party and the Iraqi Communist Party in the formation of a national front government as part of a Soviet effort to consolidate their position in Iraq.
- c) Mulla Mustafa does not wish to participate in a national front government because he fears that the Ba'th Party will use this proposal as a ploy to destroy the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP).
- d) Mulla Mustafa Barzani appeals to the U.S. Government for financial and military assistance to enable him to establish in Iraqi Kurdistan an Iraqi government-in-exile consisting of Kurds and Arabs, as a stepping-stone leading to the overthrow of the Iraqi Ba'th Party.
- e) U.S. assistance can be made available to Barzani directly or indirectly for example through King Hussein. If it is not furnished in the near future, Mulla Mustafa will

NEA/ARN:TJScotes:kl

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not be able to withstand the Soviet and Ba'th pressures which in turn will result in the eventual Sovietization of Iraq thereby threatening Free World interests in the Persian Gulf as well as Iran and Turkey.

f) Uthman conveyed a letter in Arabic from Barzani to Secretary Rogers in which Barzani makes the same appeal as above. Uthman requested an answer to this appeal before his departure from Washington in April 6.

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Barzani Plea for U.S. Assistance. Uthman stated that he is coming on a special mission from Mulla Mustafa Barzani to the United States to seek U.S. assistance at a critical time in the history of Iraq and of the Kurdish national movement. Uthman continued that as a result of the recent trip to Moscow by Saddam Hussein Tikriti, Assistant Secretary General of the Iraqi Ba'th Party, the Soviets are now supporting the Iraqi Ba'th Party's effort to establish a national front government in Iraq. This Soviet support has taken the form of Soviet pressure on Mulla Mustafa Barzani to accede to the Ba'thist request. A high-ranking Soviet Communist Party official was recently in Kurdistan trying to persuade Barzani. Barzani, however, feels that if the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) joins with the Iraqi Ba'th Party and the Iraqi Communist Party, the Kurdish national movement will in time be subverted and its force dissipated. Uthman explained that the Soviets aim through their support of a national front stratagem to establish and consolidate further their position in Iraq, particularly at a time when their position in Egypt and Syria seems to be unpredictable. Uthman continued that Soviet economic and political interests in Iraq have grown dramatically over the last several years, and the Soviets wish to protect this investment. Moreover, the Kurds believe that the Soviets intend to use Iraq for subversion not only in the Gulf but against Iran and Turkey as well. Uthman concluded that the stakes are high and that only the U.S. can, by supporting Barzani either directly or indirectly, stem the Soviet tide in Iraq. In response to my question, Uthman stated that the Kurds have been in touch with both the Shah and King Hussein. The former, however, blows hot and cold in his support of the Kurdish national movement. Barzani cannot commit himself to an all-out struggle against the Ba'th regime in Baghdad on the basis of such unpredictable support. King Hussein, sympathetic though he may be, has been unable to promise the Kurds anything but moral support. He has expressed, however, his willingness to go to Tehran to solicit further assistance from the Shah. Barzani can wait no longer for either the Shah or King Hussein. The Soviets and the Iraqi Ba'th leadership are pressing him for an answer in the next three or four

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weeks. It is for this reason that Barzani decided to send a letter (see attached rough English translation) to the Secretary of State in which he makes a final appeal to the U.S. for help. If this help is not forthcoming, Barzani will be obliged to join the national front, and the West's last opportunity to thwart Soviet designs in Iraq will have been lost.

2. Barzani Plan. Uthman then explained how Barzani intends to proceed if U.S. assistance is forthcoming. Uthman noted at the outset that the U.S. might wish to make its assistance available to the Kurds indirectly as for example, through King Hussein. This would be acceptable to the Kurds, who in any event trust King Hussein. Uthman continued that he, on behalf of Barzani, has been in touch with "reputable" Iraqi elements who are opposed to the Ba'thists and who are prepared to cooperate with the Kurds in an attempt to overthrow the Ba'th regime. These Arab elements, however, will make no overt commitment to support Barzani until they are assured of U.S. support, both moral and financial. Uthman repeated several times that once U.S. support becomes known, these elements will flock to Barzani in the north which will then be used as a center from which to launch initially a propaganda attack against the Ba'thist regime to be followed by whatever military action is required. In response to questions, Uthman was unwilling to be specific concerning military actions, saying that details would be worked out later. Uthman was certain that in view of the strong antipathy toward the Ba'thist regime in Iraq, both the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi people will welcome the establishment of a "liberation" movement located in the north. Uthman indicated that the Kurds have already been in touch with disaffected elements in the Iraqi Army which are only waiting for the signal to come over to Barzani. Of course, Uthman continued, Barzani must be in a position to pay these men their salaries as well as to maintain their families if and when they defect. This financial support would be in addition to the current financial support which Barzani must make to his own Kurdish irregulars (Pishmerga). At the present time the Iraqi regime pays Barzani approximately 150,000 Iraqi Dinars (about \$420,000) a month to support the Kurdish irregulars. If Barzani refuses to go into the national front, Uthman continued, it was likely the Iraqi Government will cut off this payment, thereby leaving Barzani with no money to support his troops (in this regard Uthman observed that there are now approximately some 24,000 Pishmerga either under arms or able to mobilize within 24 hours. Uthman added that if funds become available, the Kurds can raise approximately 50,000 men in the north in a few months time.) Uthman said that Barzani would also need "offensive" weapons to supplement the "defensive" weapons which the Kurds now possess.

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3. Ba'ath Demands of Barzani. Uthman said that as part of Barzani's willingness to participate in a national front government, the Iraqis expect Barzani to close his part of the border with Iran and permit the stationing of Iraqi troops in the north. Barzani is unwilling to accept these proposals. The Soviets have been endeavoring to ease Barzani's apprehensions by expressing their willingness to send a high-level Soviet official to stay in the north with Barzani to assure that the Iraqi Ba'athists would keep their part of the agreement which would involve ostensibly the granting of autonomy to the north. Barzani does not trust either the Soviets or the Ba'athists.

4. Soviet Aims. Uthman repeated several times his assessment of Soviet aims in Iraq and in the area. As mentioned above, Uthman stated that initially the Soviets wished to protect their major economic and political investment in Iraq. In this connection, Uthman opined that the Soviets may also have their eyes on Iraqi oil. He said that the Kurds have heard from a reliable source that Saddam Husayn has sought Soviet views and assistance in connection with the possible nationalization of the British and American shares of the IPC consortium. Uthman continued that the long-term goal of the Soviets in Iraq is to use it as a center by which to outflank Turkey and thereby NATO, as well as to subvert Iran and the Persian Gulf. Uthman said that the Soviets are already helping the Iraqis put up a missile defense system at Shu'aybah Air Base near Basra. Soviet military advisors are also widespread in the Iraqi Army.

5. Past Iranian Involvement. Although expressing Kurdish appreciation for Iranian assistance in the past, Uthman opined that the Iranians either do not know how to deal with Iraqis or are using the Iraqi situation for their own ends. He inclined to the latter view, noting that the Iranians have tried to prevent the Kurds from seeking to make contacts with other possible sources of assistance such as the U. S. Uthman stated his view that the Iranians are short-sighted if they believe that they can use the Kurds and the other moderate Iraqis in this manner. Uthman opined that continued instability in Iraq should not be an Iranian goal, as it now appears to be.

6. Egyptian Approach to Barzani. Uthman said that recently Egypt sent some emissaries to Barzani who expressed Syrian and Egyptian interest in cooperating with the Kurds for the purpose of overthrowing the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad. The Egyptians, however, indicated that it would be necessary for the Kurds to cooperate with Arab "nationalist" elements which Barzani is not prepared to do because of his belief that these elements are generally discredited among the Iraqi people.

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Situation in the North. According to Uthman, the situation in the north is quiet. Despite reports of central government assistance to the Kurds, Uthman alleged that very little has in fact been accomplished. This is one reason why Barzani has become disillusioned with the Ba'athist regime and its promises. In addition, of course, the recent assassination attempt on Barzani's life did little to enhance the credibility of the Ba'athist regime among the Kurds. Although Arab settlers have been leaving the Arbil area, the Baghdad Government is continuing to bring Arab settlers into the Kirkuk region in an obvious effort to Arabize that area before any plebiscite is held. (Barzani doubted that such a plebiscite would ever be held.) Meanwhile, Barzani's prestige among the Kurds has never been higher. Almost all of the tribes now support him including such traditional Barzani tribal rivals as the Lolans, the Harkis and the greater part of the Zibaris. In addition, the Jalal Talabani faction of the KDP is now completely behind Barzani with Talabani and Ibrahim Ahmed in the north at Barzani's headquarters.

Situation in Baghdad. Uthman described the situation in Baghdad as one of growing opposition to the regime. He added, however, that the terror employed by the Ba'athists has cowed most of the population. He said that the torture being used in Iraqi prisons is much worse than any of the Communist regimes have ever used in the past. In this regard, he said that the East Germans are reportedly training the Iraqi secret police. Uthman reiterated the readiness of the Iraqi Arab population to support any movement which would lead to the overthrow of the Ba'athist regime. He qualified this, however, by saying that the Iraqi Arabs would not support "old regime" elements or "sloganeering" Arab nationalists.